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Eminem Talks About His Friendship With Elton John

The rapper and pop-music elder connected at the 2001 Grammys in an unforgettable duet.

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When [artist id="502642"]Eminem[/artist] found himself unable to pull himself out of a [article id="1611342"]prescription-drug-fueled spiral of self-destruction[/article], he turned to [article id="1628984"]his friend Elton John for help[/article] -- and continues to do so to this day, as John made clear in a recent interview. But this wasn't the first time the rapper leaned on the pop-music elder statesman for support.

When Em was getting heat for purportedly homophobic lyrics at the beginning of the millennium, he appeared with John at the 2001 Grammy Awards for an unforgettable rendition of "Stan."

"We were debating on whether I was going to perform the Grammys or not," the rapper told MTV News after the performance. "I was like, 'The only way I'll perform at the Grammys is with Elton John.' And I was saying it in kind of jest, thinking it would never happen. The idea of it started becoming more, 'OK, this is a way to really flip it around and really f--- people's heads up."

Eminem said when the idea for the performance first came up, he was unaware of John's sexual orientation. "Of course, I heard of Elton John," he told MTV News in 2004. "I didn't know he was gay. I didn't know anything about his personal life. I didn't really care. But being that he was gay and he had my back, I think it made a statement in itself saying that he understood where I was coming from."

The rapper recently raised eyebrows again with [article id="1627699"]his new song "Elevator,"[/article] which included lyrics about openly gay singers Adam Lambert, Clay Aiken and Lance Bass that may be construed as an anti-gay slur. Neither Eminem nor John has made any statement about the possibly controversial words.

Back in 2001, Eminem took home three Grammys, but it was his duet with John -- they embraced after the song and held up their hands together in solidarity -- that became that moment everyone was talking about the next day.

"It was more so just a statement, period," the rapper said in 2001. "If you really think that about me, you really don't know Marshall. You really don't know me."